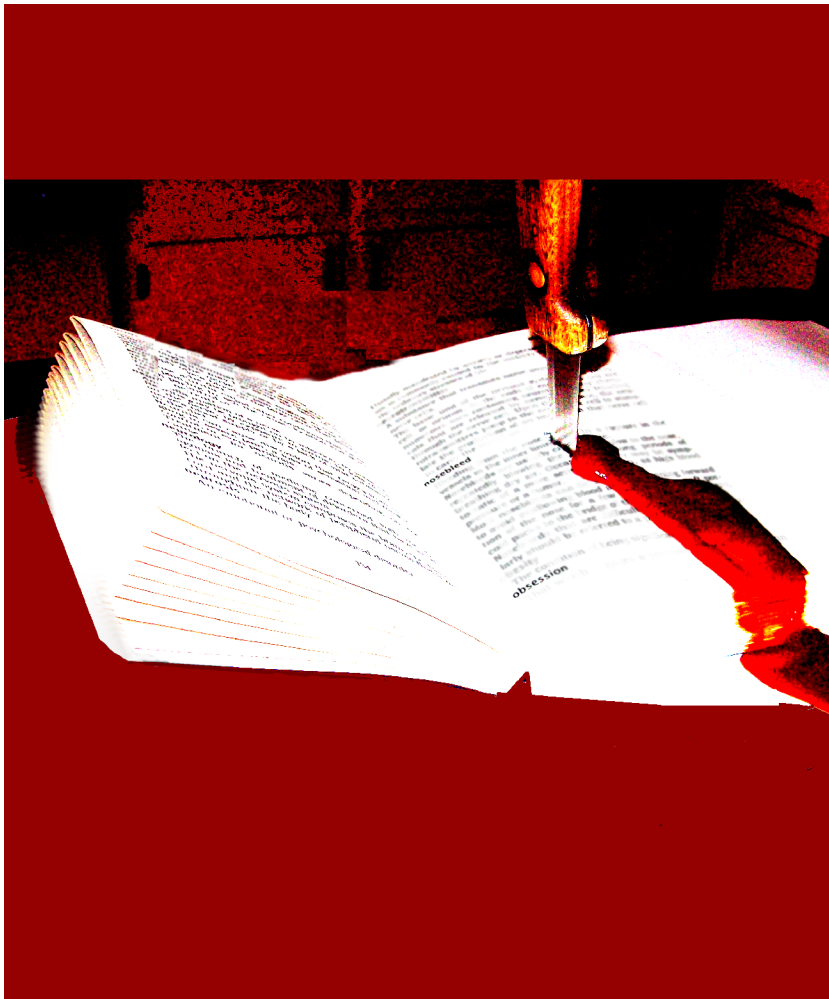


# Book of the Doppelganger

## A Fictional Novel

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# 1

## The Dinner

The place was dark. In fact, it was unnaturally dark. The wood paneling soaked up what light there was, coming from low wattage wall insets, and a dim chandelier.

The priests sat on opposite ends of the table, and the candidate sat in the middle of the left side of the table, relative to the door opening into the common den. A three course meal had been prepared, and the tall figure of Florencia towered about pastor Jeremy. A homely woman, she laid a scrumptious helping of the first course before her master. Moving the tray around to the other side, she performed the same service for assistant priest Terrance.

Finally, the pastor broke the silence, "So, you're upcoming vocation selection experience - how are you feeling about it?" Joe was a very young man - and his demeanor matched his age. He hesitated, and the pastor helped him along by asking a more direct question. "Have you received the seminary vocational literature package?" "Yes father," came from the lad.

Florencia brought the second course, and laid three platters of it before those at the table. An unsmiling woman, she said not a word as she did her work. As she laid the last one out before young Joe, father Jeremy said "Thank you Florencia." Florencia made what may or may not have been the beginnings of a smile, and then went back through the

swinging doors into the kitchen.

The talk continued, and the pastor pressed slow ball questions, mostly asking about the young lad's home life and family history. In familiar territory, Joe soon was fully engaged in the to and fro of the conversation, with assistant Terrance adding a bit here and there.

At the end of the evening, the young candidate was led to the massive doors hanging in the entrance of the rectory. The padres each patted Joe on the shoulder as he walked through the doors, and down to the street below.

## Departure

The small group of candidates had arrived in the parking lot. They carried an odd array of pieces of luggage. These were pieces that, in each case, were obviously of a second tier nature and much older than the young person whose hands gripped the handles. It was the luggage from yesteryear that had not been taken to the garbage dump, and that was subsequently found to be perfect for a young teenagers future exploratory seminary trip and the carelessness that such a person would exhibit. If it came back in tatters, there would be no loss.

The padre had made his appearance. A different person, this assistant priest was, as his choice of road-trip clothing sent a small but shocking shift of perception to the young lads who watched him as he loaded his own luggage. The young one's chaperone did have the tell-tale collar, but that was the limit of what, this day, marked him as a man of the cloth. The trip's long path at first crossed many miles of flat, open highway, going on endlessly, and slowly

hypnotizing the carload of youths, till at last they fell silent and dropped down into their own eyes-closed thoughts and feelings. Was today the day to bring the be-all of new experiences? What could lie ahead for them?

At the station, Father Terrance got out of the car. The filling station attendant began to fill the tanks of the Detroit road behemoth - now transformed into bus. A few minutes later, the padre returned to the car, carrying a small bag. A moment after Father Terrance slipped behind the wheel, the contents of the bag was more than sufficient to bring eight sleepy eyes to the wide open position. Klondike bars!

Some hours later, the padre turned the wheel to redirect three tons of Detroit metal into a double lane, or boulevard, and this caused the entourage of youths to sit up straight in the vinyl seats that were under them. The long tree lined lane stretched out in front of them, steadily rising as it swept in broad curves, first to the left, and then to the right. Without warning, there appeared a break in the trees. Suddenly the scene shifted to one of towering old buildings, and of small groups of men, all outfitted in black, standing here and there amongst them. Just ahead stood the cathedral, towering above everything else. "Magnificent!" cried one of the newcomers. The Father drove, as he had before, past the cathedral and down into a slow arc sweeping behind it, past a small hill and then stopping in front of a single story, but sprawling building. The padre turned into a parking lot there, and found a space. Killing the engine, he said "Are we ready?"

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